## IN THE CLAIMS

Cancel claim 11.

## Amend claims 9 and 21 as follows:

- 9. (Amended) A process for microbial leaching of a sulfidic material wherein bacteria of the genus *Thiobacillus* participate in the leaching process, and wherein the process comprises the steps of:
  - a) preparing an aqueous leaching fluid consisting of

at least one sulfur-containing amino acid-selected from the group consisting of cysteine, methionine, homocysteine, and amides and/or esters thereof,

optionally, bacteria of the genus Thiobacillus,

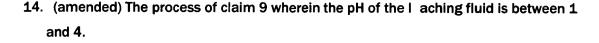
and optionally one or more salts;

 contacting said fluid with the sulfidic material for a length of time sufficient to achieve leaching,

wherein the bacteria are either a component of the aqueous leaching fluid of step (a), or, the bacteria are added to a discharging fluid, wherein said discharging fluid comprises the aqueous leaching fluid resulting from the performance of step (b).

- 10. (amended) The process of claim 9 wherein the leaching fluid includes the bacteria.
- 12. (amended) The process of claim 9 wherein the bacteria are added to the discharging fluid.
- 13. (amended) The process of claim 9 wherein, the total concentration of the at least one sulfur-containing amino acids, or amide or ester derivatives thereof, is qual to or less

than 8 X 10-3M.



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- 15. (amended) The process of claim 14, wherein the pH of the leaching fluid is between 1.5 to 2.
- 16. (amended) The process of claim 9, wherein the bacteria are Thiobacillus ferrooxidans.
- 19. (amended) The process of claim 9, wherein the at least one sulfur-containing amino acid is an amide, an ester, or mixture thereof.
- 20. (amended) The process of claim 13, wherein the total concentration of the sulfurcontaining amino acids or amide or ester derivatives thereof is equal to or less than 8 X 10<sup>3</sup>M.



- 21. (Amended) A process for microbial leaching of a sulfidic material, wherein the process comprises the steps of:
  - a) preparing an aqueous leaching fluid consisting of

at least one sulfur-containing amino acid selected from the group consisting of cysteine, methionine, homocysteine, and amides and esters, thereof,

bacteria of the genus Thiobacillus,

and optionally one or more salts; and

b) contacting said aqueous leaching fluid with the sulfidic material for a period of time sufficient to achieve leaching.